

Quick Guide to Effective Meetings



Overview

Your PTA meetings should provide information, inspiration, and instruction for local members. General meetings are open to the community. The privileges of introducing motions and voting are limited to members. To ensure that you're covering everything in your meetings, watch the PTA Basics course at www.pta.org/e-learning.

For best results, schedule meetings that are convenient for your membership, stay on task, and start (and end) on time. If attendees feel something significant was accomplished, they will come back.

If you chair the meeting, you are the leader. First, confirm that the meeting was called for a specific purpose. Then, direct all conversation at the meeting to address this purpose.



Conducting a Meeting Step by Step

The role of the president during meetings is to organize and conduct the business of the unit by:

- Recognizing members to speak.
- Remaining neutral on questions and presentation of information. Take no part in any discussion while presiding. Call upon the vice president to preside if you wish to speak to a motion; the president then has all the privileges of a member. The president returns to the position of meeting chair only after the vote has been announced.
- Stating each motion clearly after it has been seconded before allowing discussion.
- Voting (but only when voting is by ballot). In all other cases, the president may not cast a vote unless it's to create or break a tie on an issue critical to the unit.
- Declaring the result of every vote taken.



Meeting Agenda Checklist

The PTA meeting agenda should include:

- Approval of the minutes, a written document recording the events of the previous meeting
- Report of officers, standing committees, and special committees (as needed, if written reports are not available)
- Special orders (mostly business that comes up once a year; nominations/elections)
- Unfinished business (motion that was under discussion and tabled at last meeting)
- New business
- Announcements
- Adjournment



Frequently Asked Questions about Meetings

Do we have to meet? How often?

If you don't have a reason to meet, don't set up a meeting! However, be sure to check your bylaws for a minimum number of meetings that must be held.

What do I do if there is a heated debate?

Maintain your impartiality; a chair is like a judge in a court. Ensure that all participants have a fair opportunity to express their points of view. Then take control so that the meeting can continue to be productive.

What if someone is dominating the meeting?

Be assertive and use phrases such as, "I think we should hear from some other attendees," or, "Can we have some comments from the rest of the group on this?"

What if the meeting starts off well but gets stuck on a particular topic?

Take control and suggest a further meeting to discuss the issue at a later date, or that the concerned parties continue the discussion at the end of the meeting. Sometimes it will be necessary to call for a decision and then move on to the next topic.

What can I do to ensure that everyone is clear on what took place and what action is required?

Summarize by stating concisely what was said in an impartial way and end with a clear statement about what is expected to happen next.

What if I feel like I am being the “bad guy?”

Remember that it is your role and responsibility to be fair and efficient and to keep the meeting on target. This requires that you be firm at times.



Meeting Agenda Example

Sample Agenda from a General PTA Meeting:

**John Smith Middle School PTA
General PTA Business Meeting**

**September 20, 20__
7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.**

- I. Call Meeting to Order
- II. Reading and Approval of the Minutes
- III. Report of Officers
 - Treasurer’s Report
 - President’s Report
 - Membership Report
 - Principal’s Report
- IV. Reports of Committees
 - Back-to-School Picnic Chairperson
 - Family Swim Night Chairperson
 - Fundraising Chairperson
 - Apparel Chairperson
- V. Unfinished Business
 - Dads and Donuts—We tabled this item at the last meeting. Discussion will be opened regarding whether to have a Dads and Donuts morning this school year. Approximate cost is \$200, unless we can get business sponsors to donate donuts, juice, and paper products.
- VI. New Business
 - Math Club (\$100 donation for supplies)—The Math Club would like to purchase six new calculators for an upcoming competition. The club has grown by 10 new students and they need more calculators for those students to compete.
 - Ink cartridge recycling program—Smith Recycling has a program to recycle empty printer ink cartridges. We can earn money and/or choose items from their catalog to benefit the school.
 - Mrs. Jones’ reading program—Reading Leaders is a new program that Mrs. Jones would like to introduce to her 2nd-grade class this school year. The supplies and books cost \$500. She will pilot the program, and if it’s successful, she hopes to include all 2nd-graders next year.
- VII. Announcements
 - September 15—Swim Night
 - September 18—Apparel Sales Begin
 - September 21—Fundraiser Kick-Off
 - October 2—Breakfast with the Principal
 - October 4—PTA Meeting
- VIII. Adjournment